

# Newsletter

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## MINIMIZE THE EFFECTS OF TRAVEL

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Whether you are a business professional flying a distance for meetings, a recreational athlete leaving for an active week-long vacation, or a Team BC athlete leaving to compete at the Canada Games, there are few things you can do to minimize the effects of travel. Whether you are traveling inside BC or outside the province, it is very important to adapt to your new location as soon as possible.

If you follow the recommendations provided, you can minimize the effects of what is commonly referred to as 'jet lag' and maximize adaptation to your new environment. Jet lag refers to the effects of rapid transmeridian travel and includes fatigue, bowel disturbances and poor sleep. It is often difficult to distinguish from jet stress, which is attributed to the dehydrating effect of air travel, pressurized cabins, diet, lack of space and noise.

### JET STRESS

Dehydration The atmosphere in an aircraft is very dry, which results in drying of the nasal passages. Drink- but make it water. Rehydration, drinking enough water to make you go to the bathroom every 2 hours, helps. Also coffee will make you go to the bathroom more often, but does not actually rehydrate you. Coffee confuses the internal clock. Consider using one of moistening nasal sprays, but be careful about 'contagion' (see below). If you have nasal allergies, or any form of asthma so that you take steroid sprays, treat yourself with the spray before you get on the airplane even if you have no symptoms.

Contagion Many people in an aircraft have colds and flues. These can be transmitted to you and are usually spread by hand to mouth contact. Avoid putting your hand to your mouth or nose as much as possible. Wearing a surgical mask will certainly protect you from touching your mouth or nose and although it may look a bit weird, it does reduce the risk of contagion.

Food Airplane food tends to have a high fat content. This results in the food staying in the stomach for longer periods of time, particularly if you have been used to a lower fat diet. This can confuse the body clock.

Immobility In an aircraft you are often sitting for long periods, which can contribute to muscle stiffness, especially if you have trained just before getting on the plane. Try to frequently move about the cabin and perform stretching exercises in your seat. Stand beside your seat and do three sets of 10 toe lifts. The seats are not designed to support your back, so put a pillow in the small of your back. Lastly, do not sit with your legs crossed – this will only further restrict your circulation.



### JET LAG

Biorhythms Every body has an internal clock and jet lag occurs when the body has to adjust to a different setting of the clock. Your body seems to work best if it has a regular rhythm and you awaken, eat, train and sleep at relatively the same times each day. One of the reasons that you might feel groggy after sleeping in on the weekend is that you are actually causing a form of jet lag in that you are making your body adjust to a different time zone – the weekend time zone! In these cases one good night of rest will

usually get you back on track, however, it is not uncommon for young athletes to get stale as a result of not having a regular schedule. You will adjust better to a new time zone if you are already on a regular schedule. For the three weeks before travel, try getting up the same time each day, eating four meals at regular times, training at the same time and taking a break on the weekends. For one week before traveling, try and be very consistent without sleeping in. As soon as you are on the airplane, set your watch for your destination time and stick to that schedule during the flight.

Waking time For some reason, wake up time is more important in setting the internal clock than bed time (of course, going to bed late is going to make you tired because of lack of sleep). Light also triggers the internal clock setting, so immediately after getting up, go outside and get some sun on your face. If there is no sun fresh air will do. The nerves supplying the face drive an important activating and arousal system in the brain, so stimulate your face in the morning.

Meal times Meal times are also important triggers of the internal clock. High carbohydrate meals spend less time in the stomach, so may be stronger timing triggers than high fat meals which spend a long time in the stomach. Four meals a day are best.

Exercise times Training times also act as triggers for the clock. Try as much as possible to adjust your training times to coincide with your competition times, especially if you are going to be competing at an unusual time of the day for you.

Other stimuli Avoid situations that confuse your internal clock, like drinking coffee at times other than when you are used to it. Do not nap during the first few days, as this will be confusing to your clock. No matter how tired you are that first day, remember that one good night's sleep will completely refresh you, so try to be tired when you go to bed.